

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NEW DELHI 001556

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/28/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [KDEM](#) [IN](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: INDIAN EXPERTS CONTEMPLATE NEPAL WITHOUT A KING

REF: NEW DELHI 1482

Classified By: Ambassador David C. Mulford for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

1. (C) Summary: During a February 25 lunch that the Ambassador hosted for visiting Ambassador to Nepal Moriarty, Indian experts on Nepal agreed that:

-- The RNA was unlikely to collapse as a result of the suspension of military assistance;

-- A Maoist takeover is more likely to result from political failure from the King and political parties than from military victory;

-- The monarchy must make democratic changes or collapse as an institution; and

-- The King's actions have strengthened the Maoists' position. End Summary.

2. (C) The lunch, hosted on February 25 by the Ambassador in honor of Ambassador to Nepal Moriarty, gathered several of India's most prominent non-government Nepal experts including retired Ambassadors, academics, and retired military officers. Discussion focused on the crisis and the US and Indian responses.

Implications of Assistance Cutoff

3. (C) There was broad agreement that India's suspension of military aid would not impact the RNA so severely that it would be unable to withstand the Maoists. Therefore, the experts advised, India, the US, and the UK should continue their current approach to maintain pressure on the King. Participants concurred that neither the Maoists nor the RNA had the military strength to defeat the other. MG (Ret) Ashok Mehta disputed the notion that the RNA would soon face shortages of weapons or ammunition due to suspension of military aid, but conceded that the GOI and USG should investigate the question of RNA supplies more closely.

4. (C) Considering potential scenarios proposed by Ambassador Moriarty, participants identified two paths that could lead to a Maoist victory: a poorly-negotiated compromise (forced upon Nepal by other countries) that would hand too much power to the Maoists, or a campaign of targeted violence or assassinations that saps the will of the GON to resist the Maoists.

5. (C) Participants were skeptical that the supply of explosives for the Maoists' IEDs could be cut off. Although these illegal explosives come largely from commercial sources in India, participants doubted that India could stop the smuggling or implement a chemical tagging system. Terrorism expert Ajai Sahni reported that India had studied this option in the past, but that the Maoists constructed their explosives from common chemicals that were not amenable to tagging.

Nepal's Political Future

6. (C) The Indian experts came to no agreement on a solution to the present crisis, although they agreed broadly that:

-- A constituent assembly could provide a political solution to the King's problem of legitimacy. However, the Maoists would only support such a step if they are certain of dominating the process.

-- In contrast to most Nepal residents, who reportedly are not considering radical changes to the monarchy, as they are widely supportive of the institution, many Indian Nepal experts are beginning to contemplate the future of the Kingdom without a monarch.

-- The King has severely damaged the institution of monarchy with his absolutist tendencies. The Palace would not survive Crown Prince Paras as King. Former Indian Ambassador to Nepal AR Deo, who heads the Nepal Center at the prominent New Delhi-based think tank Observer Research Foundation (ORF), stated that Nepal appears to be no exception to the international trend of monarchies ending around the globe. The question for policy makers is how to ensure a soft

landing.

17. (C) Interlocutors agreed that India has relatively little leverage on the King. Retired Ambassador G Parthasarthy, one of the architects of India's 1989 economic blockade of the Kingdom, noted that any attempt to squeeze the King economically would hurt primarily the people of Nepal, thus "repeating the mistakes of 1989." Similarly, India has few levers to pressure the Maoists into concessions. Participants supported the Ambassador's observation that time favors the Maoists in the present crisis, and that the Maoists recognize this. Because they were under relatively little pressure to negotiate, Parthasarthy and Deo warned that "other countries'" efforts to craft a compromise would favor the Maoists and might enable them to take over the government.

Comment

18. (C) Aside from the opportunity to hear comments from several of India's most prominent Nepal experts on whom the GOI draws for outside expertise, the exchange also was useful for its insights into the pulse of Indian specialists' thinking on the crisis. The discussion was equally beneficial for clarifying misconceptions regarding USG policy (particularly military assistance), as a number of guests were unaware of important nuances in the USG position. The guests were pleased at the opportunity to interact with Ambassador Moriarty on his stop in New Delhi before returning to Kathmandu.

MULFORD